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Merv Griffin Wants Out

NEW YORK (AP) — Merv Griffin has asked CBS to release him from his contract as host of the network's late-night talk show, a Griffin spokesman said yesterday.

The spokesman said a story in the trade newspaper Hollywood Reporter stating that Griffin wanted out of his contract was "substantially true."

Metromedia Producers Corp. said yesterday that it has been negotiating with Griffin for a syndicated talk show. Griffin is said to be considering the offer.

CBS said, "Mr. Griffin is under contract to CBS. The decision with regard to picking up his next option doesn't come until mid-December."

The Hollywood Reporter said Griffin, whose contract runs until Feb. 15, wants out by Dec. 31.

Rumors have been circulating for months that CBS is looking for a successor to Griffin and such names as Bill Cosby, Sonny and Cher, and Dan Rowan and Dick Martin of "Laugh-In" have been mentioned. Cosby recently signed a contract with CBS for a variety show for next season and Sonny and Cher were a hit summer replacement.

The reporter quoted a Griffin spokesman as saying, "He simply does not want to stay at CBS. He felt they did not have his show on enough stations — 60 fewer than Carson and that the ratings were not going to get better than they are now."

Griffin, whose show premiered in August 1969, has run a persistent second to NBC's Johnny Carson in the ratings. The Griffin show was moved from New York to Hollywood a year ago this month in an effort to boost the ratings.